

Living Off the Grid With Organic Gardening: How to Create a

Doris Walker

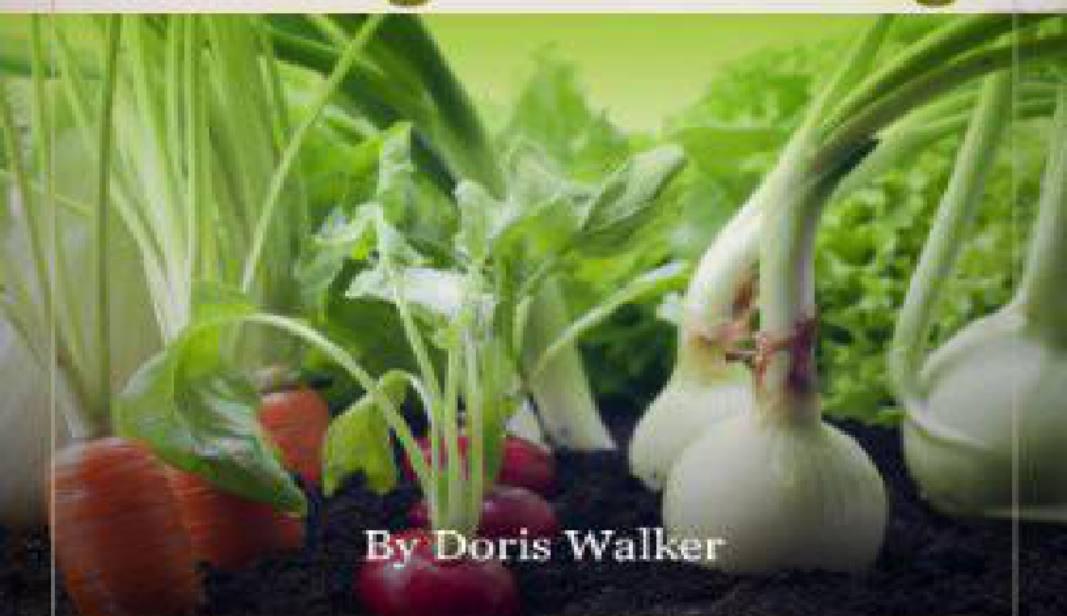
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Healthy Living Series

Living Off The **Grid**

With Organic Gardening



By Doris Walker

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Introduction - Living off the Grid with Organic Gardening

If you find yourself worried about all of the junk that is tainting the American food supply, then you might want to consider starting your own garden. Yet, if you use tap water and fertilizers you buy from the store to tend to that garden, you just might be tainting the produce you are growing. One of the best ways to have a garden and avoid these problems is to garden off the grid. This book will explain what that means and how you can effectively do it, so you can enjoy the fruits of your labors without any worry about additional costs, environmental impact or contaminants for your family.

What Is Gardening Off the Grid?

Gardening off the grid is a fairly simple concept. In fact, it involves gardening techniques that were common before the advent of electricity and running water. Basically, when you garden this way, you garden with just what Nature provides: rainwater and sunlight. No electricity, no tap water and no unnatural additions to the soil. Simply good old natural provisions.

The Benefits of Living off the Grid

Living off the grid is not a new concept. For many years, people have been ditching commercially produced electricity in favor of living a more natural lifestyle. The advent of solar technology makes it even easier to remove yourself from the power grid, without sacrificing your quality of life. Today, estimates seem to indicate that as many as 180,000 homes are off the grid, supplying their own power, while another 27,000 are using off-grid power sources to complement their powered lifestyles.

This creates a concern for those who are interested in building a garden, however. Conventional gardening requires power to send tap water to the plants and artificial sunlight to seedlings. Is it possible to garden truly organically, without a reliance on the power grid?

Yes, it is absolutely possible. Now, this does take some technical know-how. It's not as simple as planting some seeds and letting them grow. If you don't water, as you know, your seeds will die, because rain doesn't always fall when you need it to. You will need to find ways to collect rain water to use during the dry spells. Insects can also be a problem. This book will teach you how to get rid of them

naturally. If you are ready to have a garden that does not rely on "the grid," then keep reading!

Chapter 1 - Choosing Your Gardening Style

Yes, gardening does have style, but not in the sense of colorful scarves and skinny jeans. Gardening styles refer to the type or layout of the garden. You will need to choose a style that works with your gardening skills, your climate and your location. Here are some common styles of gardening:

Container Gardens

Container gardens are difficult to do off the grid, because they require containers. Containers aren't exactly "off the grid" material, but if you plant the garden and then do the rest off the grid, you could technically count these.

Container gardens do not plant the plants in the ground. Rather, they plant them in containers that sit on top of the ground, filled with nutritious soil. This can work well if your space is limited or you do not have the luxury of creating a garden space in your yard.

To keep this type of garden off the grid, you will need a source of natural soil. Store-bought soil is not going to be the best organic option. If you have a friend who is willing to let you dig up some soil from his yard, or you have a spot in your yard where you can dig that just wouldn't have been a good option for the garden itself, then you can make a container garden work.

Container gardens do have some limits. You cannot grow plants that have deep roots, because the size of your container limits the depth the roots can travel. Plants that work well in container gardens include:

- Potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Turnips
- Green beans
- Peppers
- Cucumbers
- Carrots
- Green onions
- Lettuce
- Squash

In-Ground Gardens

The most common type of garden is probably the in-ground garden. These are just what they sound like - gardens you create in the ground. If you can till up the soil and add some compost to it, you can have an in-ground garden just about anywhere that gets sufficient sun. With an in-ground garden, you can grow just about anything. Common options include:

- Cabbage
- Beets
- Pumpkins
- Watermelon
- Squash
- Corn
- Potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Strawberries
- Eggplant
- Peppers

Raised-Bed Gardens

If you have poor soil conditions, but don't want the limitations of container gardening, you can build raised beds. Simply create a box out of rot-resistant boards, add some newspaper to the bottom, and top it with high quality soil and compost. Then, add the plants you wish to grow. You can grow most plants this way, as long as they don't need really deep roots. Often, they will grow better in raised beds than in containers because the drainage is better. Consider these:

- Beans
- Brussel sprouts
- Spinach
- Asparagus
- Rhubarb
- Pumpkins

Window Box Garden

A window box garden is only meant for those who live in urban areas and cannot make a garden in their yard. Difficult to manage off-the-grid, these gardens can grow small vegetables like lettuces and other greens. With an innovative rainwater collection system and a sunny window, it may be possible to create a window garden that does not require tap water or electricity. While not the ultimate solution, every little bit helps.

Chapter 2 - Choosing a Location

Choosing the location for your garden is essential if you are going to garden off the grid. You need a location that gets sufficient sunlight and has access to rainfall, but that will not be subject to runoff if you have a significant rainfall. A flat, open area in your yard that is not overhung by trees is the ideal place for a garden. If you need to trim the trees to make this possible, then do so.

You will also need to determine how large you need the location to be. This will depend on how many and what type of plants you intend to plant. Research your chosen plants to determine how much growing space they will need. Then, use that information to calculate the amount of space you need, and choose a location that is large enough.

Chapter 3 - Choosing Your Plants

Once you have a location in mind and a type of garden, you will need to choose your plants. As you do, you will want to take note of several things, including:

- What your family is likely to consume
- What you could sell or give to others
- What plants grow well together
- What crops you can preserve for use during the non-growing season
- What plants do well in your geographic area
- What crops you can choose to have a variety of harvest times

Take the time to do your research, and find the mix of plants that will give you good food throughout the growing season, as well as food to preserve for the non-growing season. Also, choose plants that grow well together and that include foods your family will eat.

Once you know the type of plants you are going to plant, you will need to choose the seeds themselves. This is where it can get tricky. Genetically modified foods are so common in the modern American diet that you may have to look hard to find truly organic seeds. Make sure the seeds you purchase are non-GMO, so you can have a true organic garden and avoid the potential dangers of these foods.

Chapter 4 - Starting Seeds

One decision you will need to make at the outset of this project is whether you will grow your plants from seedlings or from seeds. The only way to know for sure that the plants are truly organic is to start them from seeds yourself.

Learn When to Start Seeds

Before you start your seeds, you need to do some research. Find a seed-starting chart for your area to ensure that you start the seeds at the right time to plant outdoors in the perfect season. Then, find some nursery flats you can use to start them. This will help you recycle even as you are starting your garden. The container you use to start the seeds needs to be two to three inches deep. Poke holes in the bottom for drainage.

Mix a Growing Medium

Seeds need the right soil to start well. To make your own, mix equal parts of peat, vermiculite and perlite. Then, add 1/4 teaspoon of lime to each gallon of the starter mix. This will neutralize the peat. If you are starting a more fragile plant, like lettuce, melons or cucumbers, then you will want to add two parts of well-aged compost to the mix.

Planting the Seeds

Before planting the seeds, add your soil to the containers and moisten it slightly. Drop a few seeds into each container, and cover them. The depth should be about three times the seeds' thickness. Then, top the containers with a sprinkle of milled sphagnum moss. This is a natural fungicide, and will protect the seeds from rotting before they have a chance to germinate.

Seeds need a moist, warm environment to germinate. Unless you have a greenhouse, cover your flats with glass or even plastic wrap to cultivate this environment. Then, place them in a warm place, like a window or near a heat source, like a fireplace. You will need to keep the temperature of the seeds around 70 degrees for proper germination. Mist the seeds with a spray bottle daily to keep them damp.

Caring for the Sprouts

Once the seeds sprout, the baby plants will need light. At this time, remove the cover and move the flats to a sunny window or an outdoor glass enclosure. You need to protect them from the elements for a bit longer, so do not transfer them outdoors unless you have a shelter to protect them in.

Rotate the plants so they are not forced to stretch toward the light. This will weaken the stems. Also, the young plants don't need the warmth that the seeds need, so you no longer need to keep them near a heat source. The heat from the sun should be sufficient.

When to Start Fertilizing

You will want to fertilize your seeds with quality fertilizer before you plant them outside, unless you added compost to the mix at the beginning. Fertilizer should be added when the first leaves appear. Look for true leaves, not the round cotyledon leaves. To fertilize seedlings, water them with a half-strength solution of water mixed with fish or seaweed fertilizer. Do this once every week.

Give Them Room

Once they start growing well, you will need to move your seedlings to larger containers. Use compost in these containers. Always handle seedlings by the leaves or roots, not the delicate stems.

Get Them Tough

Believe it or not, you actually need to actively toughen your seedlings so they can withstand the wind and rain of the outdoors. You can begin this by ruffling them a few times a day with your hand. Then, about a week before you are going to plant them in your garden, start taking them outdoors for a few hours each day, increasing the time each time you are outdoors. Start in a shady, warm and protected place, then gradually move them to where they will be planted. At the end of the week, plan an overnight stint for them. If they do well, they are ready to get planted.

Chapter 5- Dealing with Nature Naturally

One of the biggest hurdles of [organic gardening](#) is dealing with all of the hazards that nature likes to throw at your plants. Poor soil quality and pests are two of the biggest. Yet, there are ways you can fertilize your plants and protect them from critters without damaging your organic gardening goals.

Test Your Soil

Before you begin adding fertilizer to your soil, consider having it tested. You may need to focus on fertilizers that add specific nutrients. Adding the wrong nutrients will harm your soil. Once you have a healthy soil to start with, you can keep it healthy with compost and crop rotation, but you will need to address any deficiencies before you begin.

Organic Fertilizer Recipe

You can make your own organic fertilizer to feed your plants without toxic chemicals. To do so, mix:

- 4 parts seed or fish meal
- 1 part dolomite lime
- 1 part kelp meal
- 1 part rock phosphate

keep in mind that you should measure the ingredients by volume, not weight. Plan to use 10 pounds of fertilizer per 100 square feet of garden.

Compost in the Garden

Another way to feed your garden, and a way that is even more "off grid," is to use your own compost. Composting is not hard or expensive, it just requires some planning ahead. Create a place in your yard for a compost pile. You can use a bin, but you don't have to. The pile can be built right on the ground. Start your pile with some leaves, dried straw and grass clippings. Then, any time you have organic material, add it to the pile. All organic kitchen scraps need to go on. For instance, the rind from your watermelon or the core of your apple should be added. Surprising items you can add include eggshells, hair

and bone meal.

As your pile begins to decompose, it will need to be turned to allow fresh air to reach all levels of the compost if you use a pitchfork to turn it once every two weeks, you should have a nice pile. The compost is ready to be used when you cannot identify the different elements you put in it and it looks and smells like deep, rich soil. If it stinks, it is either too wet or has not been turned sufficiently.

How to Use Compost

When your compost is ready, you can add it to the soil. This should be done before you plant your seedlings. Add about one to three inches of the compost to the top of the soil, and then work it in. Compost should be at a depth of about four inches before planting. Do not use unfinished compost, as it will harm the growth of your plants.

Compost can also be used as mulch. Add a three to four inch layer to the top of the soil after you plant your plants, but keep a two to three inch opening around the stems of the plants. You can use their finished or unfinished compost in this way. Keep in mind that compost, unlike traditional mulch, will not block the growth of weeds. You should add more compost every year as the layers underneath decompose.

Organic Pest Control

Pest control is where organic gardeners can often get hung up. Toxic chemicals work well as pest deterrents, but they contaminate the soil.

One of the ways to limit pests is to diversify the garden. The more biodiverse a garden is, the less appealing it is to certain types of pests, as most pests will have a preferred target plant.

Next, add natural predators, if you can. Toads, frogs and lizards will eat the bugs that want to eat your plants. If you can get your hands on some ladybugs to introduce into the garden, you will rid yourself of aphids.

Adding plants with small blossoms to your garden can attract predatory insects. Sweet alyssum and dill are examples of these. The predatory insects will keep your garden free of other unwanted pests. Marigolds can deter animals, like moles, that are drawn to the scent of your garden.

Consider covering your garden with a net. This will help protect from larger pests, like birds or even rabbits. If these methods fail, consider organic pesticides, like bacillus thuringiensis or horticultural oils. You can even spray insects with a hot pepper or garlic spray to kill them if all else fails.

Finally, add a fence around the garden if you are in an area where deer or other large animals might wander into the garden. This will also help you define the area in you yard that is set aside for the garden.

Tackling the Weeds

If you create a garden that is growing well, you will face problems with weeds. Weeds like healthy soil just as much as your plants do. The best way to deal with weeds is to simply pull them. You can use mulch to limit weeds, but in the end there is nothing better than simply bending down and pulling out that weed. Raised beds can also help limit weeds. Weed by hand or with a gardening hoe/ If you can't do the weeding, you can probably pay a kid or teenager to do it for you.

Chapter 6 - Planting and Watering off the Grid

Planting is one of the easier steps of the process. Before you plant, break up the soil using a garden tiller or pitchfork, and mix in compost to give your plants a rich starting point. Then, plant them an appropriate distance apart, researching the adult size of each type of plant.

Keep in mind that keeping the plants close together in their rows can help eliminate weeds. You will want a decent space between each row to give yourself a place to walk and to maximize the air circulation. Research plants that grow well next to each other, and avoid placing plants that need the same soil nutrients too close to one another. The better you know your plants, the better equipped you will be to plant them appropriately.

Planning for Water

In a perfect world, rain would provide enough water to keep your plants happy and healthy. This world is far from perfect. One week you might have torrential downpours that threaten to drown your plants, and the next week may bring drought-like conditions. In addition, the water, when it does rain, doesn't just fall on your plants. It falls everywhere. The key to organic gardening off the grid is learning how to harvest and then effectively use that rainwater so that you have water all the time, even when nature doesn't provide it.

Watering Guidelines

Before we talk about how to collect your rainwater, let's talk about some basic rules when it comes to watering. Most new gardeners water very poorly. They water too little but too often. Here is what you need to know to avoid these mistakes:

- Plants need about one inch of water per week.
- Water should be given once or twice per week for strong plants with deep roots.
- Water should be at air temperature to avoid shock with young plants.
- Water the roots, not the stems, by placing the water at the base of the stem.
- Water in the morning to avoid lost water from evaporation.

Now, the key is how to find the water you will use for this plan. The answer to that is harvesting rainwater to use.

Rainwater for the Garden

Before you begin harvesting rainwater to use in your garden, you need to set up a system that allows you to measure the amount that falls on your garden when you do get rain. This will prevent you from over watering when the garden is getting sufficient liquid from rain. Simply set an open, wide-mouth container somewhere in your garden to measure the amount of rainfall.

Now you will need a system to harvest rainwater. The best way to do this is to attach a rainwater barrel to your home's downspouts. This will collect the rain that would otherwise run off of the roof and be wasted. Rain barrels are constructed with tightly sealed lids, so the water remains safe from mosquitoes and stays uncontaminated until you are ready to use it. You can either purchase a rain barrel or make one yourself, but make sure it has a tight lid and an access valve you can use to get the water when you need to use it.

Now, the simplest way to harvest this water is to fill a watering can or other container from your rainwater barrel and use it to water the plants. However, if you are going to have a substantial garden, this is going to be too time consuming to be effective. The good news is that the soil can actually store quite a bit of water, so you can save yourself the hassle of running back and forth by sending that rainwater right where you need it when it falls.

To do this, attach perforated hoses to the rain barrel, running them to the garden. The hoses can run along the base of your plants. When it rains, the water will be diverted from the roof through the hoses and into your garden. To make this practical, place your garden close enough to the rainwater barrels to prevent the need to run a huge length of hose.

To make this effective and avoid over-watering, you may want to set up some rain barrels to drain directly into your garden, and retain some to hold water in the case of a drought. You can always redirect the hoses from the storage barrels if you need to at a later time. Keep in mind that you might need to check the amount of water going into the garden during a heavy downpour, and redirect the hoses if needed. You don't want to wash away your plants.

With a quality rainwater harvesting system, you can have an organic garden that is well watered, without the need to rely on tap water. All it takes is a little bit of planning and preparation to see great results.

Soil Cover to Maintain Moisture

Another way to improve your water situation in an organic garden is to keep the soil covered. Mulch and compost do this, but you can also improve cover by adding covering plants. Sometimes, a tarp can be placed over the soil with holes in it for the plants to poke through, although this can limit air circulation which may damage certain types of plants. The bottom line is the more covered your soil is, the more moisture it will retain, because less moisture is going to be lost to evaporation.

Chapter 7 - Maintaining Your Garden

Once your garden has been planted, you will want to inspect it regularly. Check plants for signs of pests or illness. If you notice a problem, take the time to get to its root, rather than relying on a commercially prepared product to treat the problem.

The main maintenance you will need to work on is weeding. If you do this daily, at least as much as is possible, it will not become a huge chore. You may also need to water if your rainwater collection system is not sending water directly to the garden. Remember to water only once or twice per week, but water to give the plants a full inch of water a week. Other than that, since you are not using pesticides and your fertilizer is already in the soil with your compost, there is little maintenance to do until you are ready to harvest.

Dealing with Sick or Unwanted Plants

From time to time, in spite of your best efforts, you may have plants that become ill or need to be removed from the garden for space issues. Do so carefully so that you maintain the integrity of your garden.

If a plant is sick, then you need to pull the entire plant up. Get the roots as well as the plant itself, and dispose of it. Do not rake it under or add it to the compost. The best way to get rid of it is to burn it, so it cannot affect other plants.

If you have healthy plants that you don't need, but that aren't hurting your garden's space requirements, leave them in place. They will help prevent soil erosion and can provide a habitat for your pest-fighting garden friends. If you need to remove them, chop off the top but leave the roots (and soil) intact. The roots will help keep your garden free from an infestation of weeds.

Chapter 8 - Crop Rotation

As you garden, you will want to learn a bit about crop rotation. Planting different crops in the same area year after year will help you preserve the quality of your soil. Each plant takes different nutrients from the soil, so learn about your plants and plan to rotate your garden a bit each year.

The Need for Crop Rotation

Why is crop rotation so important? Because it maintains soil fertility. It also helps limit problems with soil borne diseases and insects, like corn rootworms. If a different crop is planted each year in the same area, your soil will stay healthy and pest free.

For example, tomatoes and corn are both known for needing a lot of soil nitrogen. If you plant them over and over in the same area, that soil will run low on this vital nutrient. If, however, you plant corn one year and then legumes, like peas, the next, you will give the area a chance to replenish itself with the plants that add nitrogen to the soil.

Planning for Crop Rotation

So how can you plan for crop rotation? Try to vary the variety of plant you put in an area. If you put in a root plant one year, then opt for a legume or leafy plant the next year. This will protect against both soil depletion and pests, since pests tend to gravitate towards plants in the same plant family as well.

Chapter 9 - Harvesting Your Garden

Harvesting is probably the most exciting time for your garden. After all, you are finally ready to enjoy the fruits of your labors and taste the produce you have worked so hard to grow. Here are some tips to help you make the most of your harvest.

Harvest Fruits and Veggies at Their Peak

With fruits and vegetables, you will want to harvest at their peak or a little before peak. This will give you the best flavor and keep as many of the important nutrients in the food as possible. The longer a food is stored off the stem, the less nutrients it contains.

Check your garden daily during harvest seasons for plants that are ready to be picked. If a plant is one that will continue producing for a while, the more you harvest, the more it will produce, so don't be afraid to take everything you can. The time of day that you harvest does not matter as much with fruits and vegetables as it does with herbs.

Leafy greens require special care during harvest. With these, clip a little from each plant sporadically through the entire crop. This will encourage more growth and keep the plants alive. If you are growing broccoli, time your harvest so that you are clipping it when the central head is quite large, but before it sends up buds.

When harvesting, try to use a knife or scissors for most produce. This protects the delicate plant tissue. When you rip it off using your fingers, you can damage the plant underneath.

Harvesting Herbs

When you grow herbs, you will want to harvest them right before you use them. The longer they are off the plant, the less flavorful they become.

mid morning is the best time for harvesting most herbs. You want to wait until the dew is dry, because the water will leach flavor from the herbs. Also, don't wash them if you can avoid it for the same reason. Basil is one exception to the mid-morning rule. You need to give it a bit more time in the sun to maximize its flavor.

Storing Your Harvest

If you have a good harvest, you are going to need to make some plans for storing it. A root cellar is a good choice for some plants, like potatoes and garlic, that can last for a long time if stored properly. You may also want to consider drying some of your herbs. Canning is another option if you have the supplies. Of course, if you have an abundant harvest, don't be afraid to share with your neighbors, friends and family! Remember, organic produce is an excellent gift to give!

Sharing and Bartering

Do you have corn coming out your ears, but a sad harvest of green beans? Find another organic gardener who has an abundance of beans and little corn to trade with. This can be a profitable way to make the most out of your harvest, even if it is a little lopsided. If you notice that certain produce simply doesn't grow well for you, consider a long-term bartering arrangement with a fellow gardener.

Don't Forget the Compost Heap!

As you harvest your fruits and vegetables, you will have some wasted plant material. The stems on your carrots or husks on your corn, for example, are often cut off and discarded. These types of discarded items actually work very well in your compost heap. Rather than tossing them away, add them to the compost for next year's garden.

Chapter 10 - Bringing the Garden Indoors

Can you garden off the grid if you don't live where you can garden outdoors? What if you live in the city or in an area that has a poor growing season. The answer is that yes, you can, if you are a bit creative.

Which Containers to Use

The first step in setting up an indoor garden is choosing containers. There is no "perfect" container. Since your focus is on organic, off the grid gardening, try to use recycled containers or containers made from recycled materials as much as possible. Often, you will have containers sitting around that you can use. You can choose any of the following:

- Pots
- Hanging baskets
- Long containers
- Window baskets

Keep in mind that you will need to add holes to some of these containers to allow soil drainage.

For indoor gardens, your container options are really endless. Instead of focusing on the perfect container for indoor gardening, focus on the perfect container for the plants you want to grow. The container needs to be large enough to hold the plant when it is mature.

Which Plants to Choose

The difficulty with indoor gardening is the fact that you can't grow everything indoors. Corn, for instance, is too tall, while watermelons and squash may need too much room to expand. Plants that can grow well indoors include:

- Herbs
- Tomatoes
- Potatoes
- Broccoli
- Lettuces

- Beans
- Cucumbers
- Root vegetables

Planning for Light

Another challenge when gardening indoors is light. Your plants need sunlight to grow, so make sure you have a window space that gets enough sunlight. A large south-facing window works best.

Once you have worked out the light and container arrangements, you will plan for your garden much as you would an outdoor garden. Use a small composting bin to create the compost, and collect rainwater from your windows and porch if you can. You should have less concern with pests and weeds when gardening indoors.

Chapter 11 - Best Plants for New or Busy Gardeners

If you are new to the organic gardening process or are busy and need a plant that requires little care but produces a big yield, then consider these winners:

- Zucchini -- If you have known anyone who had zucchini in their garden, then you know just how prolific this popular vegetable can be. It's hard to kill, too, making it a great choice for new gardeners.
- Pole Beans -- As long as you don't choose a hybrid variety, this plant will keep growing until the frost hits if you keep it picked clean.
- Snow Peas -- Easy to grow plant that produces abundantly.
- Sugersnap Peas -- Also easy to grow, and the sweet taste is enjoyed by most people.
- Swiss Chard -- As long as you keep this plant watered and do not pick it bare, it will keep producing tender leaves all season long.
- Indeterminate Tomatoes -- These tomatoes are possibly the best producing variety, and they continue to produce until frost sets in.

Choose these and mix them with some of your family's most popular produce to create a pleasing garden that offers an ample harvest.

Chapter 12 - Best Practices for Organic Gardening

Up until now we have talked about the nitty gritty details of organic gardening. This chapter will be a checklist of the [best practices for organic gardening](#), highlighting on some of the most important facts from the previous chapters. Once you have gotten a handle on the basics, you can refer to this chapter as a reference point each year when you begin your garden.

- *Choose plants carefully* -- Choose plants that are productive in your climate and grow well in your soil, rather than choosing primarily based on what your family likes to eat.
- *Opt for non-hybrid plants* -- Hybrid or genetically modified plants can harm your organic eating goals. Opt for the standard varieties.
- *Use compost well* -- Compost can be mixed into the soil and used as a natural mulch. Do both for the best result.
- *Plan for crop rotation* -- As you plan your planting this year, plan to make some rotation from the previous year.
- *Harvest your rainwater* -- Set up a rainwater harvesting system so you can garden off the grid.
- *Start your seeds at the right time* -- Research the growing season in your area, and start your seeds appropriately so you can plant them outside after the danger of freezing temperatures is past.
- *Toughen up those seedlings* -- Your seedlings will need to be tough to survive outdoors, so give them some rough love as you start them inside.
- *Group plants close together in rows, with space between each row* -- Close grouping eliminates weed problems, while space between each row promotes air circulation.
- *Water well but infrequently* -- Water to a depth of one inch once or twice per week.
- *Attract helpful creatures* -- Grow plants that will attract helpful creatures, such as those that eat harmful insects.
- *Address weeds regularly* -- Short periods of weeding daily will help keep weeds from turning into a huge problem in your garden.
- *Water near the base of plants* -- The roots are where the water is needed, so put the water near the base, not near the leaves.
- *Deal with pests naturally* -- Pests are going to happen. Use natural predators and repelling plants to help.
- *Get rid of sick plants* -- Sick plants can make other plants sick.

Pick them and burn them to protect your garden.

- *Maximize sun exposure* -- Plants need sun to live and thrive. Plant your garden in a place that offers maximum sun exposure.
- *Avoid adding anything that isn't natural* -- Your garden is only organic if you work hard to keep it that way. Do not add anything to it that is unnatural.
- *Harvest often* -- Many plants will continue to produce if you keep them well harvested.
- *Do as little environmental harm as possible* -- It may be tempting to till up your entire backyard, but try to work with the area as it is as much as you can to lessen your overall impact.
- *Be flexible!* -- Gardening is full of surprises. If you find that one plant doesn't do well, then try a new one next year. The more adaptable you can be, the better your results will be, and the more fun you will have with the process.

These "best practices" work well for both indoor and outdoor gardens. In fact, the only real difference between the two is the size and location. The basic principles of giving the garden healthy soil, sufficient water, adequate sunlight and a pest-free existence remain the same.

The point is, gardening off the grid is not as hard as you might think. If you can plan for light and water, all the other "power" you will need comes from your own two hands. Whether you are off grid yourself or simply want to garden without a dependence on electricity, it is entirely possible with the right education and supplies.

Conclusion

Gardening is one of the most rewarding activities you can pursue. When you garden organically, it becomes even more rewarding. You will be able to feed your family food that you grew yourself that is free from toxic chemicals. Every time you make a meal, you will be confident in the quality of the food you are serving.

It is possible to go "off the grid" when you garden as well. Collect rainwater and make the most of the sun's light and heat, and you can grow a productive garden without the need to rely on commercially produced electricity or water. In the end, your family will be healthier and you will be doing your part to cut your environmental impact, all without sacrificing the quality of the food you have to eat.

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